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Grand Lodge Bulletin

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FREEMASONRY AND OUR NATIONAL CENTENNIAL

Courtesy of 'Masonry in Manitoba'

A short time ago I was talking to a brother in the Library and the conversation turned to the earlier days of the West, and the times when many of the easy comforts of today were lacking. Memories were recalled of the time when, as boys, we had to split the wood and see that the kitchen wood-box was kept full; when homes were warmed by coal or wood stoves; when the buggy or sleigh was the common means of transportation. In our recollections we realized that we ourselves, having experienced such ways of life, had lived through dramatic changes over the years.

If many of us can remember conditions over fifty years ago and have watched the progress that has been made over that time, it will not be difficult to go back another fifty years and realize how much greater hardship was endured by a still earlier generation. We know that in comparison with our own time there was toil and adversity of which we can have little understanding. This was the ordinary way of living of those citizens of one hundred years ago. They had no idea of the comfort and luxury that later years would bring. They accepted things as they were, meeting the daily round with courage and resourcefulness, dreaming of better things, in the hope that life would be richer for themselves and especially for their families. They were not prescient, but somehow they believed in themselves and in their country, and faced the future in quiet faith.

Freemasonry, too, had its part in the development of Canada. From the earliest days Masonry has accompanied the vanguard of settlement. Beginning in the year 1749 when the first civilian Lodge was formed in what later became Halifax in Nova Scotia, as Canada grew Freemasonry joined in the march of progress. It helped to give stability to the communities where it was organized, and formed the center of comradeship for men who faced a life of toil and isolation.

So it was in our own Province one hundred years ago. As new territory opened up and towns were established, the Masonic Lodge, along with the Church and the School, became an integral part of the community. Our brethren of those early days were willing to make sacrifices for the Craft. In many places they met in uncomfortable, drafty and poorly heated rooms. They would travel miles by buggy, sleigh or on horseback over rough and often muddy roads to attend Lodge. The Lodge meant much to them, and it became

one of the stabilizing influences in the community. These pioneer Masons paid the price of what we are and have now. Our early brethren, in their loyalty to Masonic ideals, contributed more than we can measure to the growth of Canada, not in material achievements, not in establishing industries nor in setting policies of government, but in strengthening the moral fibre of its members, and in its own quiet way helping to lay the foundations of integrity and honor on which our Nation must be built.

So as we celebrate our National Centennial it is well that we should give Freemasonry a place in our thoughts. In honoring past generations let us include those who is their humble way held fast to the ideals of brotherhood; who tried to reach out to all men and close the divisions that have been the cause of bitterness and suspicion.

Many of our members, as citizens of their communities, are working enthusiastically in the Centennial projects of their own towns or municipalities. Yet as a group Freemasons can contribute something too. How shall we do this? Each Lodge must make its own plans. It might be the awarding of a prize to a pupil of the local High School for the best essay on "Canada, its Achievements and its Future". Each Lodge might well plan one evening when the Masonic pioneers of the area are remembered. Certainly, each Lodge should have a "Canada" night when the brethren consider their responsibilities as citizens. The one project, however, that will give the greatest opportunity for us to show our faith in Freemasonry and our gratitude to our forebears, is the building of the proposed new Masonic Memorial Temple. Through this we can demonstrate to our fellow citizens our belief in sincere brotherhood. It will be the most fitting tribute to those pioneers whom we do well to honor, "those sturdy men who set up the altar of Masonry on the frontier of the commonwealth. They were men of faith who builded better than they knew, as men of faith always do." Today, "the past is prologue." Our task is "not to perpetuate old errors, but to build a good present and prepare for a better future." So may we say with the Roman poet: "Let ancient times delight other folk. I rejoice that I was not born till now."

Here is the new century before us. We can share in its visions, and now, today, build a Memorial that

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EDITORIAL

During the month of February all Grand Lodges in Canada, with the single exception of that of British Columbia, together with the two District Grand Lodges of Newfoundland had their representatives meet in the City of Toronto for what is known as the Bi-ennial Conference of Grand and District Grand Lodges of Canada, A.F. & A.M.

Some months prior to the Conference selected Grand Lodge representatives prepared papers and others, having been supplied with the papers, prepared response or rebuttal. During the course of the meeting the papers were presented, the response given and then the question under discussion was thrown open for general examination. Matters of very considerable interest were thoroughly discussed by leaders of the Fraternity from the various sections of Canada and it was evident that students of Freemasonry had given freely of their time and talents in the presentation and discussion of the material contained in the papers.

The subjects discussed were:

1. Masonic Trials. How can procedure be simplified or varied to make it easier for Lodges to deal with Masonic offences.
2. What is the prognosis of our Craft in the years ahead?
3. What is the place of tradition in Freemasonry? How far is it helpful? Can it be a hindrance?
4. Why should Freemasons not undertake community projects outside the Craft?
5. Are we reaping the 'Whirlwind' of the harvest (in members gained) of the 1920's and 1940's?

In addition to the papers a report was given dealing with Fraternal Relations with Grand Lodges in countries all over the world and this report also received considerable attention through discussion.

In the next two or three months a verbatim report of the entire proceedings of this important Conference will be provided for every Lodge in Alberta, with papers given in full and all discussion recorded.

From time to time we hear requests for information on subjects of Masonic interest and the purpose of this editorial is to endeavor to have our Constituent Lodges make good and practical use of the verbatim report; there are doubtless Lodge sessions when no particular work is entailed and when time is available for Masonic education and it cannot be too strongly urged that the proceedings of this vital meeting be studied by the officers of Lodges and that full use be made of the contents of the papers; doubtless there would be keen interest among our membership if opportunity were given to examine the proceedings in detail and there are unquestionably entirely competent members in every Lodge to lead discussion in regard to the papers.

SCH.

Masonry has greatly enriched my life. It has given me friendships that I cherish dearly. It has, I think, whispered subconsciously to me in silent hour of caution and encouragement. I like going back to my Lodge. I have found it refreshing and good to step aside out of the path of my busy life and sit again with the Masons who have carried on in my absence.

—Edgar A. Guest.

GRAND MASTER'S COLUMN

Man, once created, immediately started a search for knowledge, a search that has continued to the present day and by all appearances will continue into the future. Whether this acquired knowledge has been and will be always for the best is debatable but it really matters little for man will not be deterred from his quest. Through all ages man has changed but little. Can we today not see ourselves in he who inhabited the Garden of Eden? Was it not his ill advised search for knowledge that proved to be his downfall? When confronted with the consequences of his action did he not try to excuse himself by blaming someone else?

Knowledge in itself is not a bad thing but rather it is man's motive for acquiring knowledge that can be evil. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and fools hate knowledge".

One of the great secrets of Masonry is that knowledge is attained by degrees, wisdom dwells in contemplation, there we must seek her. This is not just a mere statement but rather it is a truth for man to use for his own personal improvement. The intelligence of man cries out for him to contemplate knowledge and thereby open for himself a whole new world, a world of wisdom. A man of knowledge need not necessarily be a wise man, but a wise man will always be a man of knowledge and a man of intelligence. The great example of all time is Solomon the King. When given the opportunity of choosing for himself any of the great benefits of life he chose wisdom and then he found all the other things had been added unto him. Should we not do likewise and be guided by the teaching that "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding"?

Man is on continuous search for those things that satisfies his appetites of challenge. What else caused the early astronomers to attempt to decipher the meaning of the universe and perceive the Great Architect's plan of things? What else is causing man to attempt to conquer outer space? Yes, man has ever been attempting to meet the challenges of his time but the greatest one of all and the one that he has had the least amount of success in, is properly understanding himself. It takes a wise man indeed, and one with a vast source of wisdom at his disposal to accomplish this. To succeed here a life time will be required. Montaigne tells us "A man must become wise at his own expense". This does not mean that we do not have sources of assistance at our disposal for Freemasonry continually teaches man this great philosophy for the living. The extent of the Mason's success in this venture depends entirely on how honestly and sincerely he sets about this task. Let us therefore apply ourselves, as Masons, to the task at hand, for a man's wisdom is his best attribute.

"For the yesterdays are but a dream,
And the tomorrows are but a vision;
But today
Well lived, makes every yesterday
A dream of happiness,
And every tomorrow a vision of hope."

—Quoted by H. V. Jones, G.M. (Tasmania)

THE MASTER'S RESPONSIBILITY

R.W. Otto C. Brown

Past Junior Grand Warden, In The
Empire State Mason

Freemasonry is in the most fortunate position of institutions today because its main tenet is brotherhood. It is not rent by schisms and chasms that beset most organizations in this scientific, machine age when so many dogmas are having to be abandoned, with all the consequent divisions, controversies, fierce arguments and disillusionments. We have no underbrush of outmoded doctrines, shibboleths and prejudices to be cleared away. We can move forward, united in the bond of universal brotherhood.

America has stressed the idea of the value of the individual to a degree unmatched in the rest of the world. Yet actually the individual today is taking a beating which is one cause of the protests and demonstrations. Masonry has a marvelous opportunity to take the individual seriously, to make every Lodge member feel important and needed. Very few "loners" knock at the door of Masonry, so the brothers are naturally inclined to gregariousness and sociability, another great advantage.

Today there is enormous competition for a man's interest and there is a corresponding hatred of boredom. Everyone wants to be where the action is, which explains the popularity of "happenings" in New York City.

Every Lodge meeting should be a "happening," and that entails participation of all members. It is the responsibility of the Master to see that every one keeps busy. But "happenings" don't just "happen," they have to be carefully planned to the last detail. A Master can't just come to Lodge expecting things to happen; the program for each meeting has to be planned well in advance, even for the entire year, to make the desired impact.

At the beginning of his term of office, the Master might well question all past practices and customs, everything should be rethought. For a young country, Americans get in awful ruts. For instance, is there anything sacrosanct about having a church service at 11:00 every Sunday morning? That was geared to our agricultural culture and the demands of a farmer's routine. Is it a Landmark that Lodge Communications must open at 8:00 in the evening? Lodges meeting in the Greater New York area might find it more convenient to meet earlier and close earlier, members could go directly from the office, have dinner at the Masonic Club if their Lodge is meeting in the Masonic Hall, and proceed to the Lodge rooms, saving at least two hours and a great deal of energy. This would increase the opportunity for relaxed sociability outside the Lodge and everyone would arrive at Lodge in a brotherly mood.

Then, what? First and foremost a smooth, fast-moving ritual, letter perfect, no fumbling. Then devote other meetings to studies on how to make the ritual more meaningful to our 1967 members.

Secondly, a meeting should have some element of surprise, of genuine interest, of vitality. We live in the most exciting era the world has known, and that sense of excitement and wonder should be present in the Lodge room. If a Master feels he is not the greatest programmer in the world, he need only ask for help, there are many idea men, many available lecturers, films, musicians, projects.

A visiting committee is a must, to let every member know that his presence at Lodge is important. The Grand Master has sent out many letters to the unaffiliated and those about to be, urging them to make room for Masonry in their lives. The Visiting Committee can share in the joys and sorrows of their brothers, showing that they care, and developing real comradeship.

Following the Third Degree there is apt to be a let-down of interest — that is a crucial time for the new member. It is up to the Master to sustain interest, to give the brothers specific assignments, to develop them as Masons, to make them feel needed.

The Master not only has the responsibility for holding the members, but also for creating a climate favorable to the addition of new members, a reservoir of possibilities. Each Lodge would do well to sponsor at least one youth project. DeMolay chapters need support and the informed interest of Mason. Acacia clubs on university campuses welcome Masonic visitors and the co-operation of Lodges in the area; students would enjoy home hospitality. Boy Scout troops need and deserve Masonic sponsorship. Men in the armed forces would be glad to receive letters, invitations to attend Lodge programs, small gifts if serving overseas.

The Master who designs his year, who develops his Lodge's membership, who stresses the value of the individual, adds strength to our beloved Fraternity.

Our Grand Master said on St. John's Day in Utica: "Our Goal cannot be reached without work. I plan to work as I have never worked before and I expect each of you to do likewise, — our craft requires leadership and you and I must be prepared to give it."

This is the challenge of our Grand Master, and let us be inspired by his worth, wisdom and devotion, and accept this challenge. Let us promote the spirit of brotherhood in all Lodges and go forward and strengthen our Fraternity, with attendance at our meetings and with added membership. Let us catch his great objective in his efforts to return to our membership for the coming year our unaffiliated members and to prevent many members from dropping out at the end of the Lodge year.

It is not too much to ask any Master to lay out his plans and designs in advance and to dedicate his one year to the services of Masonry.

That Old, Old Friend of Mine

*Dedicated to Worshipful Brother F. Patterson,
PM Jasper Park Lodge No. 143*

There are many priceless jewels
We may covet day by day,
And many worldly treasures
That we gather by the way,
But of all this life's possessions
That human hearts defend,
There is none I hold more dearly
Than a certain old, old friend.

A friend I've always reached for
As I've stumbled o'er the trails,
And found a hand of welcome
From a heart that never fails;
For friendship that is rooted
Deep into the mellow past,
Like the rugged timeless pine tree,
Holds its virtue — to the last.

A friendship that was nourished
By the many trying years,
That has ever grown and flourished
Through the seasons smiles and tears,
With a sort of understanding,
Veiling all our human pride,
And I could open up my heart
Where troubles often hide.

Some friends just fit the contours
'Round a worn and weary heart,
Like our old and favorite ridin' boots
From which we dread to part,
And he's never changed by fortune,
Nor swayed with worldly fame,
His smile still like the sunshine,
He's always just the same.

Ah! there were times at our house
When life looked cold and grim,
But our humble hearthside seemed to glow
At just the sight of him,
There were many laughs and chuckles,
A frown — and oft' a sigh,
As we'd dig into life's treasure chest,
Those golden days gone by.

And I would that he might understand,
Ere all our days are spent,
How I've treasured his acquaintance—
Just what his smiles have meant;
For those memories I cherish,
Like the sweetest, rarest wine
That I sip in recollections,
Of that old, old friend of mine.

Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do which must be done, whether you like it or not. Being forced to work, and forced to do your best, will breed in you temperance, self-control, diligence, strength of will, content, and a hundred other virtues which the idle never know.

—Charles Kingsley.

BUCK UP

If you are near or have even passed that stage in human life when you are dreading the word retirement you may be excused for being discouraged with the final result of life's work, and the arbitrary decision of your fellows that you are 'too old' to continue doing that for which you have fitted yourself.

"Youth must be served" and the history of the human race proves that the ills to which flesh is heir have always connived to upset the hopes and plans of later life. So don't let yourself dwell on your 'misfortune' when that time comes.

Britain's great statesman, who so recently joined the immortals, spoke of Marlborough in these words:

"The span of mortals is short, the end universal, and the tinge of melancholy which accompanies decline and retirement is, in itself, an anodyne."

It is foolish to waste lamentation upon the closing of human life.

Noble spirits yield themselves willingly to the successively falling shades which carry them to a better world.

We are indebted for this bit of philosophy to Albert S. Hall-Johnson, Past Provincial Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of the United Grand Lodge of England in South America. He refers to those two great men, Churchill and Marlborough, both Freemasons.

PROMPTING DURING WORK

"The poor Worshipful Master was becoming so harassed and embarrassed by the continual promptings from all quarters of the Lodge, that, in desperation, he exclaimed: 'how many prompters are there in the Lodge?' The somnolent Senior Warden replied, with a start, 'Three, besides the Outer Guard or Tyler.'"

This is more serious than funny. Many a ceremony is ruined by injudicious and often unnecessary prompting . . .

There ought to be only one prompter (be he who it may) and he should follow carefully the entire ceremony throughout and be ready to offer the missing word when (and not until when) called upon to do so, either by a glance or a gesture from the performer. Many ceremonies are spoiled by the varied and often incorrect interpretations of those whose duty it is to keep quiet. Among the 'experts' there always exists the laudable urge to help the straggler, but in the Temple they should restrain themselves and leave prompting to one — and only one.

—London Grand Rank Ass'n. Bulletin

Freemasonry — (Continued from page 29)

for generations will be a lasting witness to the truth and power of our ancient Craft.

*"Over my head the stars, distant and pale and cold,
Under my feet the world, wrinkled and scarred and old:
Back of me all that was, all the limitless past:
The future waiting beyond, silent, untenanted, vast.
Back of me spreads the past in numberless yesterdays,
And I have hope in my heart, as I face the unknown ways.
Under my feet the world. Over my head the sky.
Here at the center of things, in the living present am I."*